

CHRISTMAS in the Lincoln White House

DRAWER 2

MARY TODD LINCOLN - FIRST LADY.

71.2009.085 04424



# Mary Todd Lincoln

## Christmas in the White House

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# LINCOLN LORE

No. 141

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 21, 1931

## LINCOLN LORE

BULLETIN OF  
THE LINCOLN  
HISTORICAL  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



ENDOWED BY  
THE LINCOLN  
NATIONAL LIFE  
INSURANCE  
COMPANY

Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

### CHRISTMAS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

The social conditions existing during the war between the states makes it improbable that Christmas was featured to any extent at the White House during the time the Lincoln family occupied the executive mansion. There is a story about one incident which happened at Christmas time in 1863 that may serve as an introduction to this monograph.

Long before Christmas a live turkey had been sent to the White House by one of Mr. Lincoln's friends with the suggestion that it be used for the Christmas dinner. Tad, the president's youngest son, won the confidence of the turkey, whom he named Jack, fed him and petted him until the turkey followed him around the White House grounds.

The day before Christmas while the president was engaged with one of his Cabinet members in an important conference, "Tad burst into the room like a bombshell, sobbing and crying with rage and indignation. The turkey was about to be killed. Tad had procured from the executioner a stay of proceeding while he hurried to lay the case before the President. 'Jack must not be killed; it is wicked.' 'But,' said the President, 'Jack was sent here to be killed, and eaten for Christmas dinner.' 'I can't help it,' roared Tad between his sobs, 'He's a good turkey, and I don't want him killed.' The President of the United States pausing in the midst of his business took a card and on it wrote an order of reprieve. The turkey's life was spared and Tad seized the precious bit of paper fled to set him at liberty."

The White House during the term preceding the coming of the Lincolns had been a bachelor's quarters for four years. Three rollicking boys took possession of the premises in the spring of 1861; Robert, age seventeen; Willie, age ten; and Tad, eight years old. While Robert was in Washington for the first few days after the family arrived he soon returned to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was a student at Harvard.

Just before the Lincoln family left Springfield, Mrs. Lincoln arranged a party for Willie, whose birthday, December 21, was very close to Christmas. As the party was held on the

22nd, it may have been a joint birthday and Christmas party. One of the invitations has been preserved; it reads as follows:

Willie Lincoln  
will be pleased to see you  
Wednesday afternoon  
at 3 o'clock  
Tuesday, December 22nd

The first Christmas in the White House, December 25, 1861, was undoubtedly the happiest one. The children were together on this festive occasion for the last time. There had been one other boy in the Lincoln family but he had been dead for more than ten years. While Christmas probably recalled to the parents the sorrow of his passing, the pleasure they had in the fellowship of their other children would allow them to become reconciled to this earlier loss.

We may feel sure that Abraham Lincoln had visited Joseph Schot's Toy Shop before Christmas and made some purchases which he knew the boys would appreciate. In fact there are well established traditions that he was a rather frequent visitor to this store kept by the old crippled soldier who had fought under Napoleon and who was now content to make wooden soldiers for the children of America's capitol city.

The Christmas season of 1862 was a sad one indeed for the Lincolns. Willie Lincoln passed away when they had been occupying the White House one week less than a year. Mrs. Lincoln is said never to have gone into the room in which the child was laid out, after the funeral services were over.

The loneliness of Tad was pathetic after the loss of his constant playmate, Willie, but two years older than he; and the attempt of the President to serve as a companion to the only son now left at the White House was responsible for the very strong attachment which grew up between father and son.

Robert was ten years older than Tad and was at the executive mansion very little after the Lincoln family took up their residence there.

While Jack, the turkey, did not grace the table at the White House for the Christmas dinner in 1863, some other fowl was substituted, undoubtedly, for this pet bird which had escaped the usual fate of turkeys by Tad's appeal on his behalf.

There was one bit of Christmas joy that came into the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln on this day which must have made the day in their own family circle a memorable one.

A son of one of Lincoln's close friends in Illinois, who had been serving in the Confederate army, had been captured. Lincoln had an interview with the lad the day before Christmas

with the result that the following telegram was sent to his father in Illinois on Christmas eve:

"Your son has just left me, with my order to the Secretary of War, to administer the oath of allegiance. I send him home to you and his mother."

There must have been a cheerful atmosphere in the White House on Christmas, 1864. Advice of the capture of Savannah had reached the President that morning, and the following day he wrote to General Sherman as follows:

"Many, many thanks for your Christmas gift: the capture of Savannah . . . please make my grateful acknowledgment to your whole army, officers and men."

Another letter written on the day following, suggests a presentation which evidently was received with deep appreciation. He wrote to Dr. John MacLean acknowledging the announcement that the trustees of the College of New Jersey had conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws.

Could he at this time have been reminded of that early political effort when he first offered his services to the people and closed with this announcement:

"If the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."

Now "a body of gentlemen of such high character and intelligence" had conferred upon him the highest compliment within their power and he replies, "I am most thankful if my labors have seemed to conduct to the preservation of those institutions under which alone we can expect good government—and in its train sound learning and the progress of the liberal arts."

In 1913 the building in which the old toy shop was located was razed. It had seen service for half a century and contributed much to the happiness of the Lincoln children and other Washington boys and girls. It was in reality a monument to the child life of the city and it is to be regretted that it could not have been preserved. It would have recalled many visits of Mr. Lincoln and Tad to this store and especially the memorable one which tradition has recorded as follows:

"Tad teased his father to buy him a company of tin soldiers. These gaily decorated toys stood on wooden pedestals, but the tin general was broken and would not stand. The clerk in charge suggested that a fine upstanding captain might do for a commander and the sale was made." It was this incident which paved the way for the promotion of one of the great generals of the war according to the recorder of this typical Christmas story.

# Yule with the Lincolns

## White House Observances Recorded

By STEWART W. McCLELLAND

CHRISTMAS is so universally observed today that it is difficult for us to conceive of a time when the feast of our Savior's nativity was more like the Sabbath Day with services in the churches followed by more or less the usual traditional Sunday dinner. The early settlements, because of the austerity of their religion, frowned on gaiety of any variety—particularly was this true in those areas which were settled by the Scotch and Scotch-Irish, whose observance even today of Christmas is rather negligible. Life was real and life was earnest to our pioneers. In such an atmosphere Abraham Lincoln was born, and to a great extent spent the major portion of his years.

Christmas cards as we know them today really had their beginning about 1860, and while Christmas trees in continental Europe date back to the 13th century, in the Midwest, at least, the first Christmas tree was erected by a minister in Cleveland, in the '50s, and was the cause of a great deal of adverse criticism. So, it is not surprising that any search for data on the Lincoln family's ob-

Stewart W. McClelland is a nationally known speaker, educator and Lincoln authority, whose Lincoln Day addresses have appeared annually in *Vital Speeches* for several years. He is national president of the Exchange Clubs, and president of Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tenn., a liberal arts college founded in the name and memory of the 16th President, to make education available to mountain youth. The school owns one of the finest Lincoln collections in the world.



servance of Christmas does not bear any great fruit, nor enough baubles even to hang on the smallest Christmas tree.

Before the years in the White House, we can find no reference to the Lincoln family's observance of Christmas, and there are some rather startling inferences to the contrary. On Dec. 24, 1848, Abraham Lincoln replied to his father's request for the sum of \$20 to settle a judgment against Thomas Lincoln's property. He cheerfully sent the \$20, but lawyer-like insisted that his father look carefully into the long overdue claim before the sum was paid, and wound up the letter with this simple note, "Give my love to mother and all the connections.

Levite who is within thy gates."

Their oldest son, Robert, was a student in Harvard, so it can be taken for granted this was the last time that the Lincoln family was a unit, for in February of '62 the loss of little Willie brought added grief to a heart that was already burdened with the sorrows of the nation, and struck a blow at Mary Lincoln from which she never recovered.

The two following Christmas seasons furnish no incidents in the family of the Lincolns, but those two periods were each marked by unusual letters which showed that Lincoln had the Christmas spirit in his heart. If there could not be peace on earth, there was within him good will toward men, and on Dec. 23, 1863, he penned a note to Fanny McCullough—the daughter of his old friend Col. William McCullough, who had recently fallen under Grant's command at Coffeeville, Miss.—which, for simplicity of structure and depth of feeling ranks with the famous letter to Mrs. Bixby and that to the parents of Elmer Elsworth.

On Christmas of 1863, Lincoln gave a Christmas gift instead of receiving one. Usher F. Linder, a Douglas Democrat but a long time friend of the old circuit riding days of Illinois, had been asking a pardon for his son, who had enlisted in the Confederate Army, and was a prisoner of war at Point Lookout, Md. On Dec. 22 and 24, Lincoln had wired the commander at Point Lookout to send Linder to him, and on Dec. 26, he wired the father that his son Dan had just left the White House with an order to the Secretary of War to administer the oath of allegiance, discharge him, and send him to his parents.

By Christmas of 1864, the darkest days of the Civil War were past and Lincoln could receive gifts instead of sending them. On Dec. 20 that year, the board of trustees of the College of New Jersey, better known today as Princeton, awarded to Abraham Lincoln, the Chief Magistrate of the United States, the honorary degree of doctor of laws. Anyone would appreciate such a present. Even in the midst of the rejoicing over the news of the capture of Savannah, Lincoln found time to write President John Maclean of Princeton, telling him that he appreciated the honor and accepted the degree not merely for himself, but because of his position at the President of a great government, whose course had met the "approval of a body of gentlemen of such character and intelligence, in this time of public trial."

This course of government, in the attempt to make all men free, brought forth one of the rare letters extant which Lincoln penned on Christmas Day. This letter was to Bayard Taylor who was for a time the secretary of the legation while Cameron was ambassador to Russia. It is so short that I quote

[incomplete]



*from Speaking of A. L. by Stewart W. McClelland  
Privately issued - Chicago - 1947*

## CHRISTMAS WITH THE LINCOLNS

---

Christmas is celebrated so lavishly today that it is difficult for us to conceive of a time when the feast of the Nativity differed little from the Sabbath Day with services in the churches followed by the traditional Sunday dinner. The early settlements, because of the austerity of their religion, frowned on gaiety of any sort, particularly in those areas which were settled by the Scotch and Scotch-Irish, whose observance of Christmas even today is rather negligible. Life was real and life was earnest for our pioneers. In such an atmosphere Abraham Lincoln was born, and to a great extent spent the major portion of his years.

Christmas cards as we know them today really had their beginning about 1860. While Christmas trees in continental Europe date back to the thirteenth century, in the Mid-West, at least, the first Christmas tree was set up by a minister in Cleveland, Ohio, in the '50s, and was the cause of a great deal of adverse criticism. It is not surprising then, if a search for data on the pioneer Lincoln family's observance of Christmas produces so little fruit and not enough baubles to bedeck even the littlest Christmas tree.

We can find no reference to the Lincoln family's observance of Christmas before the years in the White House, and there are some rather startling inferences to the contrary. On December the twenty-fourth, 1848, Abraham Lincoln replied to his father's request for the sum of twenty dollars to settle a judgment against his father's property. He cheerfully sends Thomas Lincoln the twenty dollars, but lawyer-like, insists that his father look carefully

into the lone overdue claim before the sum is paid. He ended his letter with this everyday close: "Give my love to mother and all the connections. Affectionately your son, A. Lincoln." To us today it might seem strange to find here no greetings of "Merry Christmas" and "A Happy New Year," but as a matter of fact such salutations do not appear to grace letters until a later date. Great man though he was, Abraham Lincoln observed the conventions of his times.

Without question, the Lincoln family must have celebrated Christmas, but such celebrations must have taken on the austerity of the fast days of the period rather than the feast days of the present. With the occupancy of the White House by the Lincoln family members they came into an atmosphere which allowed Christmas Day to be observed with more celebration than in the Middle West. Those of Catholic and Episcopalian faith had always made more of this day than had the Puritans and the denominations which were the out-growth of Calvinism.

The first Christmas in the White House, in 1861, is of special interest because it was the only Christmas on which the whole family was together, a then unbroken family group except for little Edward Baker Lincoln who died in 1850 in Springfield. A Christmas dinner was served to which many friends had been invited -- both personal and political -- some from Illinois, all of the Blairs, Assistant secretary of the Navy Fox, and the pastor of the Lincoln's Washington church, Dr. R.D. Gurley, for the Lincolns had learned "to forget not the Levite who is within thy gates."

The Lincoln's oldest son, Robert, was a student in Harvard, so it can be taken for granted that this was the last time the Lincoln family was a unit, for in February of '62, the loss of little Willie

brought added grief to a heart already burdened with the sorrows of the nation, and struck a blow at Mary Lincoln from which she never fully recovered.

The two following Christmas seasons yield no holiday incidents in the family of the Lincolns, but those two periods were each marked by unusual letters which show that Lincoln had the Christmas spirit in his heart. If there could not be peace on earth there was, within him, good will toward men. On December 23, 1862, he sadly penned a note to Fanny McCullough, the daughter of his old friend, Colonel William McCullough, who had recently fallen while serving under Grant at Coffeeville, Mississippi:

Executive Mansion  
Washington, December 23, 1862

Dear Fanny: It is with deep regret that I learn of the death of your kind and brave father, and especially that it is affecting your young heart beyond what is common in such cases. In this sad world of ours sorrow comes to all, and to the young it comes with bittered agony because it takes them unawares. The older have learned ever to expect it. I am anxious to afford some alleviation of your present distress. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better. Is not this so? And yet it is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have had experience enough to know what I say, and you need only to believe it to feel better at once. The memory of your dear father, instead of an agony, will yet be a sad, sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer and holier sort than you have known before.

Please present my kind regards to your afflicted mother.

Your sincere friend,

A. Lincoln

For simplicity of structure, and for that depth of feeling



which always marked Lincoln as a man of wise and understanding heart, this example ranks with the famous letter to Mrs. Bixby and that to the parents of Elmer Ellsworth.

During the Christmas of 1863, Lincoln gave a Christmas instead of receiving one. Usher F. Linder, a Douglas Democrat but a long time friend of the old circuit-riding days in Illinois, had been asking for a pardon for his son, who had enlisted in the Confederate Army, and was a Federal prisoner of war at Point Lookout, Maryland. On December 22 and 24 Lincoln had wired the commander at Point Lookout to send young Linder to him, and on December 26 he wired the father that his son, Dan, had just left the White House with an order to the Secretary of War to administer the Oath of Allegiance, discharge him and send him to his parents.

By Christmas of 1864, the darkest days of the Civil War were past and Lincoln could receive gifts instead of giving them. On December 20 of that year, as I have mentioned in another chapter, the Board of Trustees of the College of New Jersey, better known today as Princeton University, awarded to Abraham Lincoln, the chief magistrate of the United States, the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. Anyone would appreciate such a present. Even in the midst of the rejoicing over the news of the capture of Savannah, Lincoln found time to write President John MacLean of Princeton telling him that he appreciated the honor and accepted the degree not for himself, but as a tribute to the Government, whose course had met the "approval of a body of gentlemen of such character and intelligence, in this time of public trial."

Mindful always of the effect on all men everywhere of human bondage anywhere, it was foremost in Lincoln's thought in the

Christmas season of 1864. It produced one of the rare letters extant which Lincoln wrote on a Christmas Day. This letter was to Bayard Taylor who was for a time the secretary of the legation while Cameron was ambassador to Russia. It is one of Lincoln's shortest letters:

My dear sir: I think a good lecture or two on Serfs, Serfdom, and Emancipation in Russia would be both interesting and valuable. Could you not get up such a thing?

Freedom for all men is in the air and Lincoln is making the most of it.

On one of the beautiful squares for which the city of Savannah is so justly proud, there still stands a beautiful home erected in the '40s by an English cotton merchant and long occupied by the famous Judge Peter W. Meldrim, which is still pointed out as the headquarters of General Sherman after the capture of Savannah.

From this house there came a telegram on December 22, from the conquering General William T. Sherman to His Excellency, President Lincoln, Washington, D.C.: "I beg to present you as a Christmas-gift the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty ammunition, also about 25,000 bales of cotton."

After this gala season, how rapidly events winged to the close. With just one Christmas season of receiving gifts in the White House, Lincoln had spent his career there performing acts of mercy and giving relief where relief could be given. Soon, in the Easter season of 1865, he was to give his life itself, and in that giving gain for himself a place among the immortals -- and leave to us a Bethlehem-star example of a man who had done nothing in malice.

## LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1028

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

December 20, 1948

## THE LINCOLNS' BELATED SANTA CLAUS

Many thousands of people will receive Christmas greetings this year via Santa Claus, Indiana, bearing the post mark of this unique Hoosier town. Such an expression of good will is before the editor of Lincoln Lore just now. Besides the customary post mark and stamp cancellation on the cover there is a cachet imprint depicting the reindeer drawn sled with its popular driver. Above the picture is the printed line, "Santa Claus Land" and below the design the words, "Santa Claus, Ind."

Very few of the recipients of these tokens will associate the "Santa Claus Land" with the boyhood surroundings of Abraham Lincoln. The cabin home where Abraham Lincoln lived for fourteen years, from seven to twenty-one years of age, is but four miles from Santa Claus neighborhood, which we might say embraces part of the playground of Lincoln as a Hoosier youth.

Contributing further to this coincident of place is the concurrent use of the new Lincoln three cent stamp and the Santa Claus post mark. It appears as if many of the purchasers of the Christmas-blue stamp, memorializing Lincoln's address at Gettysburg, had in mind the Christmas mailings through the Santa Claus post office. It is not likely that people associating the stamp and the post mark have reflected that Lincoln had been "Back home again in Indiana."

A recent Associated Press dispatch dated Santa Claus, Indiana, Dec. 18, carried this story with reference to the annual tourist parade: "Crowds of more than 1,000 turned out each day this week, and 25,000 visitors passed through Santa Claus Park last Sunday."

This auto parade is not confined exclusively to the last two weeks in December, but all through the year increasingly large numbers of tourists visit this interesting children's community. A large majority of the visitors drive through the Nancy Hanks Lincoln State Park and pass directly in front of the memorial building erected to the memory of Lincoln's mother, who lies buried within five hundred feet of the highway.

It will be observed that the Santa Claus enterprise will indirectly make a tremendous contribution to the Lincoln saga of Southern Indiana by calling further attention to the home of the Lincolns and especially the boyhood days of Abraham. Hence, a little known Lincoln shrine, possibly inadvertently, will become one of the best known of the many Lincoln memorials.

It might be expected that there would be some legends associated with the story of Santa Claus, but unfortunately they do not reach back to the days when the Lincolns lived close by. It is a belated Santa Claus as far as the Lincolns are concerned. The settlement in the immediate vicinity where the village is now located began to take some form about 1850 when a German Methodist Church was organized and later a building constructed. The community which soon boasted a store became known as Santa Fe.

The village had grown sufficiently by 1855 to warrant the application for a post office and here is where the legend comes in. The people had hoped that Uncle Sam's Christmas gift to the town that year would be a post office, and sure enough just the day before Christmas, a large white envelope bearing the seal of the United States arrived. But the people were doomed to disappointment as the enclosure stated that there was already a town in Indiana bearing the name of Santa Fe.

It was suggested by the authorities at Washington that the community would have to specify a different name before a post office could be established. That very Christmas Eve at their annual celebration while the people were discussing the choice of a new name, according to the tradition extant:

"A little boy came rushing into the hall shouting—'The Christmas Star is falling.' Everyone rushed to the door and windows just in time to behold a flaming mass shooting down from the heavens and go crashing with a thunderous roar against a low, distant hill. The earth and building shook for a moment, then all was quiet. Scarcely anyone dared to breathe. 'It is a good omen,' some said, 'A star from the East has fallen in our midst.'"

After the excitement of the hour had passed and the crowd had become somewhat composed, that very night it was suggested that they apply for a post office under the name of Santa Claus. Eventually the commission for the post office arrived. It appeared that the name of Santa Fe—spelled Santafée on one map—was also retained for a portion of the town proper. The road running east and west through Section 1 in Clay Township shows the northern division labeled "Santafée" and the adjacent southern section "Santa Claus Post Office."

It was not until 1925 that any special attention was given to the Santa Claus Post Office, when it was visited by newspaper photographers and also given some attention by "Believe-it-or-not Ripley." At this time a press correspondent stated that the hamlet consisted of sixteen houses, a white church, a one room school, a tavern, a general store, a barber shop, and a post office. He also stated that there were sixty inhabitants there, but felt the number was somewhat exaggerated.

It was during the long term of Jim Martin, who was postmaster for thirty years (1905-1935), that the post office with the bewitching name slowly emerged as a center of yuletide enterprise. Since the statue of Santa Claus was erected in 1935 the pattern and immediate location of the site has undergone considerable change and is still in the process of development.

The hamlet promises to become, for Indiana at least, a mecca for children with its own miniature railroad system, Christmas tree lane, trail of Mother Goose characters, house of dolls, etc., and especially at this season of the year, the center of interest is the large tableau depicting the nativity scene. There is also Candy Castle which will not be overlooked. From the historical viewpoint the most important development is a museum for children's playthings of the long ago, attractively displayed and continually growing.

Abraham Lincoln during the Washington years often visited a store where toys were sold, situated but four blocks from the White House. It was operated by Joseph Stuntz, a former color bearer under Napoleon. Forty years ago Margarita Gerry wrote a little book entitled "The Toy Shop," in which she dramatized the President's visits to the store. It is said that when Lincoln was missing from the White House the search usually ended at the toy shop where Lincoln had gone to pick up something for Willie or "Tad." When one remembers the small boy Abraham in the Indiana log cabin with his sister Sarah, two years older than himself, and then visits the toy emporium, now so close to their former home, he may be led to think of the town as The Lincolns' Belated Santa Claus.

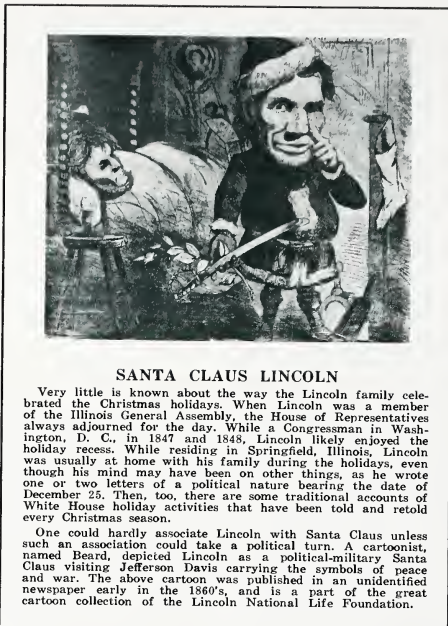


# INDEX 1956

Aaron, 1417; Alexander, 1412; Allison, 1422; Alschuler, 1426; Ames, E. S., 1401; Ames, L., 1421; Anderson, 1408; Andrews, 1400, 1409; Angile, 1396, 1398, 1417, 1421; Archambault, 1425; Aristotle, 1403; Arnold, 1418, 1423; Arthur, 1422; Balaubrammian, 1404; Ballard, C., 1395; Ballard, M., 1417; Balmer, 1403; Bancroft, 1403; Banks, 1422; Barker, 1403; Barkley, 1399; Barnett, 1422; Barnewell, 1426; Barons, 1396; Barrett, 1423; Barton, 1401; Bax, 1417; Baxter, 1426; Beauregard, 1408; Beckwith, 1424; Beecher, 1424; Beim, 1398; Bennett, J., 1422; Bennett, R., 1407; Berger-Klee, 1417; Berry, 1418; Bester, 1396, 1398; Beveridge, 1397; Billings, 1399; Bishop, 1395, 1409, 1410, 1417; Bisell, 1421, 1424, 1425; Bixby, 1395; Black, C., 1397, 1418; Black, R., 1395; Black, 1403; Blaine, 1425; Blair, C., 1400; Blair, K., 1400; Blair, M., 1425; Blair, W., 1400; Blondin, 1422; Blood, 1425; Blunt, 1395; Bonelli, 1412; Booth, 1408, 1409, 1417, 1422; Borghum, 1398; Borjas, 1417; Bossin, 1417; Brady, 1415, 1426; Brantner, 1422; Brook, 1418; Browning, 1417; Brown, 1411, 1421; Brumfield, 1413; Bryan, 1403; Bryce, 1395; Buchanan, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1425; Burlingame, 1400; Burns, 1424; Cameron, 1411, 1419; Carnegie, 1403; Carpenter, 1403; Carruthers, 1417, 1420; Chandler, 1422; Chase, 1421; Christ, 1395, 1403; Church, 1426; Clark, M., 1424; Clark, N., 1424; Clark, T., 1399; Clay, 1395, 1416, 1423; Cobb, 1399; Cochran, 1422; Coard, 1423; Coleman, C., 1398; Coleman, J., 1399; Columbus, 1417; Coaling, 1395, 1407; Corning, 1395; Cresson, 1417; Cresson, 1417; Creswell, 1412; Curran, 1417; Current, 1398; Currier, 1415, 1425; Curn, 1424; Curtis, 1419, 1422; Curzon, 1395; Cyril, 1423; Czolgosz, 1422; Dablin, 1411; Danford, 1403; Daniels, 1396, 1398; Danielson, 1424; Davis, D., 1397; Davis, J., 1424, 1426; Dixon, 1419, 1424; de Haure, 1395; Dennison, 1423; Dickinson, 1421; Dole, 1421; Donald, 1421; Douglas, 1405, 1416, 1420, 1421, 1425; Dowling, 1409; Dresser, 1401; Drinkwater, 1403; Dugan, 1417; Dubois, 1422; Ducharme, 1417; Dufresne, 1421; Dyer, 1411; Eckman, 1396; Edison, 1405; Edward VII, 1397, 1404; Eichmann, 1425; Eiffert, 1398, 1405; Eisenhower, 1421; Elizabeth II (Queen), 1397; Elkins, 1422; Ellis, 1423; Ellsworth, 1395; Emerson, 1393; Everett, 1423, 1424, 1425; Farrington, 1403; Faulkner, 1422; Ferrandini, 1422; Field, 1422; Fillmore, 1422; Florence, 1408; Foote, 1422; Forney, 1423; Fox, 1424; Franklin, 1419; Fremont, 1421, 1422, 1424, 1425; French, 1424; Fry, 1425; Gage, 1417; Galileo, 1403; Gamble, 1403; Gammans, 1417; Gandon, 1421; Gardner, 1415, 1426; Garfield, 1422; George IV, 1423; George, Lloyd, 1395; German, 1423; Gilmore, 1407; Gills, L., 1412; Grant, U. S., 1406, 1408, 1410, 1425; Gray, 1424; Greeley, 1395, 1398, 1423; Griffin, 1409; Grimes, 1421; Guiteau, 1422; Gurley, 1402; Hall, F., 1401; Hall, L., 1418; Halleck, 1395, 1423; Halstead, 1411; Hamilton, 1399; Hanks, James, 1413; Hanks, Joseph, 1413; Hanks, L., 1413, 1417; Hanser, 1417; Harlan, 1410; Harris, 1417; Harte, 1395; Hay, 1416, 1422, 1425; Haycraft, S., Sr., 1426; Haycraft, S., Jr., 1426; Heald, 1406; Helman, 1403; Helm, Ben H., 1420; Helm, Ben, 1426; Helm, E., 1410; Henry, J. P., 1422; Herndon, 1397, 1417, 1418, 1421, 1426; Hesler, 1421; Hitchcock, 1399; Hooker, 1395, 1423; Hoover, 1401; Howe, 1424; Hufferford, 1413; Hutchinson, 1420; Hutton, 1422; Hyatt, 1426; Ingle, 1422; Ives, 1415, 1425; Jackson, 1422, 1425; James, 1422; Johnson, 1396, 1402; Johnson, 1420; Johnson, S., 1403; Johnston, 1421; Jonas, 1424; Jones, Thos. A., 1409; Jones, Thos. D., 1421; Jones, W., 1421; Joy, 1423; Judd, 1424;

Kane, 1401; Kelly, 1405; King, 1422; Kitch, 1417; Klement, 1421; Kiernan, 1409; Knopf, 1409, 1421; Knott, 1417; Knos, Joseph, 1424; Koro, 1403; Kraemer, 1403; Lamson, 1397, 1399, 1417, 1424, 1425; Lauck, 1417; Lee, 1400; Leland, 1401; Lincoln, Abraham (President), Acrotab; Blondin, 1423; Addresses, 1402, 1416; Ancestors, 1413; Bibliography, 1396, 1409, 1421; Book of the Year, 1398; Books for Youth, 1405; Cartoons, 1412; Civil War Month, 1408; Cosmopolitan Christian, 1401; "Council of

Litsey, 1418; Lockridge, 1405; Logan, 1408; Lorant, 1398; Lousing, 1424; Lovejoy, E., 1402; Lovejoy, G., 1421; Lyon, 1423; Ludwig, 1409; Land, 1421; McKelley, 1417; McCagg, 1423; McClellan, 1395, 1411; McCormick, 1419; McCulloch, 1395; McDougall, 1407; McGowan, 1417; McKelley, 1417; McLean, 1424; McMurtry, R. G., 1396, 1420, 1421; McMurtry, W., 1422; McNally, 1421; McPherson, 1422; Mahomet, 1423; Mallion, 1424; Manor, 1422; Manship, 1415; Marble, 1424; Marsh, 1421; Massey, 1403; Mattingly, 1409; Maxfield, 1399; Maynard, 1401; Mearns, 1396, 1398; Medill, 1416; Menard, 1407; Meserve, 1415, 1425; Miers, 1396, 1398, 1421; Miller, F., 1412; Miller, G., 1425; Mitchell, 1418; Monaghan, 1421; Monroe, 1396; Morrison, 1417; Moser, 1395; Mudd, N., 1396, 1398; Mudd, S., 1396, 1398; Mundell, 1401; Mulligan, 1421; Napoleon I., 1423; Napoleon III, 1404; Naut, 1424; Nathan, 1398; Newhall, 1403; Newman, 1407; Newton, 1399; Nicolay, H., 1403, 1405; Nicolay, Jr., 1400, 1416, 1418, 1425; North, 1421; Ogden, 1426; Oglesby, 1399; Olson, J., 1405; Onstott, 1417; Ostendorf, 1412, 1417; Owen, 1420; Palmer, 1419; Palmerton, 1422; Paradis, 1417; Patton, 1426; Peck, 1422; Peterson, 1417; Philip of Spain, 1423; Phoenix, 1399; Pitt, 1395; Plato, 1395; Pownall, 1409; Pratt, H. E., 1396, 1403, 1409, 1417; Pratt, Mrs. H. E., 1403, 1417; Rainier, 1421; Ramsey, 1411; Randall, J. G., 1397, 1398, 1419; Randall, Mrs. J. G., 1397, 1409, 1417; Raymond, 1407; Reed, 1426; Reed, 1403; Reynolds, 1422; Rife, 1399, 1420; Rines, 1401; Ripley, 1411; Risdon, 1407; Roberts, 1422; Robespierre, 1423; Rogers, 1401, 1425; Roosevelt, F. D., 1396, 1421; Roosevelt, T., 1400; Russell, 1396; Rutledge, 1397, 1401; Ruzicka, 1400, 1409; St. Cyr, 1401; St. Paul, 1395; Sale, 1400; Saunders, 1424; Schriver, 1417; Scone, 1399; Scribner, 1400, 1409; Scripps, 1401, 1418; Seavy, 1426; Seligwick, 1422; Serzel, 1409; Seward, 1408, 1419, 1421, 1424, 1425; Shakespear, 1403, 1420; Shanks, 1403; Shearer, 1417; Sheridan, 1408, 1411; Sherman, 1422; Sherwood, 1403; Shipley, 1413; Shutes, 1423; Simpson, 1401, 1408; Smith, 1423; Sparrow, 1413; Squire, 1409; Stanton, 1408, 1411, 1425; Starr, J., 1403; Starr, T., 1396; Stephens, 1423; Stern, 1412; Stoddard, 1396, 1398, 1409, 1417; Stuart, 1420; Stump, 1417; Sumner, 1424; Swetnam, 1417; Swett, 1422; Tansey, 1417; Tarbell, 1399, 1405; Taylor, L., 1417; Taylor, Z., 1395; Theilmann, 1403; Thomas, 1409, 1421; Thompson, M., 1418; Thompson, W., 1410; Thorne, 1425; Tiffany, 1409; Todd, 1420; Tolstoi, 1395; Townsend, 1396, 1398, 1399; Trietsch, 1398; Truman, 1422; Trumbull, 1422; Twain, 1399; Usher, 1425; Valentine, 1403; Vanaman, 1423; Vawter, 1418; Victoria (Queen), 1404; Volk, 1424; Volk, L. W., 1421, 1422, 1423, 1425; Volk, Mrs. W. D., 1424; Wadsworth, 1422; Wakeley, 1422; Waldsmith, 1403; Ward, Artemas, 1422; Ward, Artemus (C. F. Brown), 1399; Ward, B., 1417; Ward, W. R., 1403; Warren, L. A., 1396, 1409, 1421; Warren, 1422; Warrington, 1400; Washington, 1395, 1402, 1421, 1422, 1424, 1425; Watson, 1411; Watterson, 1399; Weed, 1422; Wefer, 1417; Weik, 1397; Welles, 1395, 1411, 1421; Wentworth, 1419; Wheeler, B. E., 1417; White, H. L., 1417; Whitney, 1421; Wiley, 1421; Williams, 1412; Willis, 1425; Wilson, mot. 1419; Wilson, 1417; Winston, 1425; Wise, 1411; Wood, 1424; Woodbury, 1399; Woodward, 1417; Wright, 1422; Xavier, 1423; Zornow, 1417.



SANTA CLAUS LINCOLN

Very little is known about the way the Lincoln family celebrated the Christmas holidays. When Lincoln was a member of the Illinois General Assembly, the House of Representatives always adjourned for the day. While a Congressman in Washington, D. C. in 1847 and 1848, Lincoln likely enjoyed the holiday recess. While residing in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln was usually at home with his family during the holidays, even though his mind may have been on other things, as he wrote one or two letters of a political nature bearing the date of December 25. Then, too, there are some traditional accounts of White House holiday activities that have been told and retold every Christmas season.

One could hardly associate Lincoln with Santa Claus unless such an association could take a political turn. A cartoonist, named Beard, depicted Lincoln as a political-military Santa Claus visiting Jefferson Davis carrying the symbols of peace and war. The above cartoon was published in an unidentified newspaper early in the 1860's, and is a part of the great cartoon collection of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

War", 1426; Editorials, 1406; Elizabethtown, Ky., 1426; Father's Elizabethtown Cabin, 1415; Gettysburg, 1424; Greatness, 1395; Immigration, 1404; Index, 1426; Indian Chieftains, 1421; Jackson Editorial, 1423; Laughter, 1399; Legal Case, 1424; Lincoln, 1421; Gage, 1420; Living Expenses, 1425; Locomotive Medallions, 1422; Magazines, 1417; Martyred Presidents, 1422; Necrology, 1403; New York Herald, 1425; One Hundred Years Ago, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424; Parent's Marriage, 1418; Penny, 1423; Perfect Tribute, 1400; Photographs, 1426; Postage Stamps, 1422, 1423, 1426; Prince of Rails, 1397; Santa Claus Lincoln, 1426; Scotch Cap & Military Cloak, 1424; \$84,000 Question, 1407; Soldier's Reprieve, 1421; Son's Military Career, 1410; Statuary, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425; Vice-Presidential Nomination, 1419; Voting for Lincoln, 1425; War Weapons, 1411; Lincoln, Abraham (grandfather), 1413; Abraham (cousin), 1401; Asa, 1424; Berseba (grandmother), 1413; Edward (son), 1397; John (gr. grandfather), 1413; John Ledyard, 1424; Mary Mudd (aunt), 1401; Mary Todd (wife), 1399, 1398, 1401, 1417, 1423; Mordecai I (gr. gr. grandfather), 1413; Mordecai II (gr. gr. grandfather), 1413; Nathaniel, 1413; Mother, 1413; Stephen, 1421, 1426; Robert (son), 1397, 1410, 1418, 1420, 1425; Samuel, 1413, 1424; Sarah Bush Johnson (step-mother), 1420, 1426; Thomas (father), 1396, 1401, 1413, 1418, 1420, 1421, 1426; Thomas (son), 1397, 1408; Timothy, 1424; William (son), 1397, 1410.



Speech re: Victorian Holiday Traditions

Our use of the evergreen tree and greenery to celebrate Christmas are traditions which stem from Germany. Specifically, after Queen Victoria of England married Prince Albert of Germany, near the middle of the 19th century, she began to import many of the German Christmas customs. She greatly influenced fashions and trends not only in England, but also in the United States. Thus we have the Christmas tree today.

In Lincoln's era, the tree was frequently put up and decorated on Christmas eve. Without electric lights the lighting on the trees was provided by candles. They were lit briefly and burned during the evenings' festivities which included parties with games, much like those played by Scrooge's relatives in the Dickens' story, "A Christmas Carol." At the end of the evening, after the children were in bed, the candles were carefully extinguished.

Initially, the first decorations on the tree included gifts and food! Homemade cakes, candies and sugared fruits trimmed the tree. This practise quickly expanded because enough was never enough for the Victorians! Paper chains, garlands, bows, and handmade ornaments bedecked the tree. You see many of these items on our tree.

Materials for the ornaments came from scraps of cloth leftover from sewing projects and from nature. This pinecone, for example, is simply painted gold and with that it is an ornament for the tree. This snowflake is crocheted and stiffened with starch. Fans were common tree ornaments and this one is made of folded paper, decorated with scraps of lace and ribbon. Others were made of fabric, often scraps from ball gowns, etc. or lace. Perhaps the most popular tree ornament was the cornucopia. These were made by rolling paper, in this case, perhaps, a wallpaper scrap, into the shape of a cone and adorning the outside. This cone has a picture,

probably cut out of a magazine pasted on the outside to resemble a medallion. The cone was then stuffed, as this one is, with sugared candies, nuts, etc.

The tree was the centerpiece of the Christmas decorations, but the whole home was ornamented. Doorways, windows, and mantles were festooned with greenery decorated with pinecone or bits of dried flowers assembled in miniature arrangements called tussie mussies. Ribbon or bows were also used. Greenery was typically draped or twisted around the handrails of stairways.

Dining room table centerpieces rivalled the tree for the oohs and ahs of guests. Toward the end of the century, the hostess frequently started at the ceiling with the top of the dining room chandelier and actually tied the chandelier to the centerpiece with elaborate greenery and trim forming one solid column of decoration from the ceiling to the tabletop. Sprigs of greenery or holly trimmed the silver candlesticks and even the napkin rings on the table.

The food served while entertaining during the Christmas season exemplified the Victorian belief that enough is never enough. Meals were multi-course and sometimes actually had subcourses in between. In one example, a seven-tiered cake frosted like a wedding cake, was then so heavily covered with whole unpeeled oranges that one could not see the frosting. Guests would eat the oranges first and discover the surprise of the cake underneath.

The Victorians truly enjoyed the Christmas holidays. They were a kick off to the winter social season and set the tone for parties and balls to come. }

Thank you, questions??

JLF

12-2-95

# MorristownPatch

ARTS, GOVERNMENT

## The Artist Who Drew Santa Had Local Ties

Thomas Nast is responsible for how we think of Santa today.

By Mike Radinsky December 25, 2010

Thomas Nast, an artist with many ties to the Morristown/Morris Township area, is credited with creating the image of Santa that we know best.

His home, Villa Fontana, stills stands on Macculloch Avenue in Morristown today. The Morristown–Morris Township Library (<http://morristown.patch.com/listings/the-morristown-morris-township-library>) has a Thomas Nast collection that was, fortunately, spared in the explosion that rocked the library in May. And Macculloch Hall (<http://morristown.patch.com/events/macculloch-hall-exhibit-opens-november-14th-twas-the-night-before-christmas-vintage-holiday-ornaments-and-toys>) in Morristown currently has multiple Nast creations on display (<http://morristown.patch.com/articles/holiday-themed-exhibit-opens-at-macculloch-hall>).

Nast was an illiterate German immigrant who had studied art in New York. His boss, Fletcher Harper, gave him an assignment passed down directly from President Abraham Lincoln. The President wanted Harper's to create a "special Christmas picture" that would link Christmas to the ongoing war effort.

At first, Nast had no idea what to draw. The German tradition was that of a "Pelz-nicol", a dour, thin figure dressed in fur, who smacked naughty children with a hazel switch – not very jolly. Then Nast's sister, a New York schoolteacher, read him the poem "Twas the Night before Christmas." They talked throughout the night and by morning Thomas was inspired.

The cover of the Jan. 3, 1863 Harper's Weekly shows a rotund Santa Claus with a full white beard, sitting on a sleigh with reindeer attached. He is dressed in a patriotic fashion with a fur trimmed blue coat adorned with stars and red and white striped pants, a chimney hat and a belt. Santa, under the flag of the United States, hands out packages from home to soldiers and drummer boys. One soldier holds aloft a new pipe, while another shows off a new pair of socks. A jack-in-the-box thrills the drummer boys. In the background is a greased pig chase and a ball game. The camp is decorated with garlands of Christmas greenery, just as there would be at home.

Everyone appears happy.

All is well on Christmas in this Union camp.

One particular part of the illustration may have been Nast's own little joke for President Lincoln. Santa, dressed as Uncle Sam, is seen holding out a dancing puppet that bears an unmistakable resemblance to Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy.

The puppet appears to have the string tied firmly around his neck, as Santa makes him dance. The illustration was demoralizing to the south, as Santa appeared to be on the Union side.

Nast drew another illustration for that edition of the magazine, which showed a touching scene of a wife at home and husband at war. With her children tucked tightly in bed, she appears to be praying at the window. Meanwhile, her husband spends a cold and lonely Christmas Eve on picket duty, staring at pictures of his children, his rifle at the ready. In the top left corner, Nast drew Santa on a rooftop, climbing into the chimney.

Nast produced nearly 76 Christmas engravings over 24 years. He refined his version of Santa, giving him the rosy cheeks and red suit that we know today. Thomas also established the idea of the "naughty children" list, and Santa having elves to assist him in his workshop.

Most importantly, Nast established Santa's home. Illustrating scenes from four years of a brutal war had perhaps impacted his decision not to allow any one country to claim Santa. So, in his December 25th, 1866 engraving, Nast places the title "Santa Clausville, N.P." over a drawing of Santa's village.

By making Santa a resident of the North Pole, Nast establishes Santa Claus as a representative of goodwill for the entire world.



PHOTOS (5)



Interested in a follow-up to this article?



SEE NEXT IN ARTS

**Reuse, Repurpose, Rejoice: Eco-Friendly Christmas Display Worth The Trip**



## SCROOGE LINCOLN?

From the ALPLM blog by Thomas Schwartz, Dec. 20, 2010

The memorable holiday character of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens's 1843 classic *A Christmas Carol* brought into popular usage the phrase "Bah! Humbug!" Scrooge went beyond ignoring the holiday. He believed it to be a conspiracy of slackers to get a day off from work. "A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December," exclaimed Scrooge. Ultimately, Scrooge's problem was his inability to embrace the spirit of the season that also included reconnecting with friends, family, and the less fortunate. The Scrooge model is supported by a recent study suggesting that the higher one's socioeconomic status, the lower the "empathic accuracy." In other words, one becomes less attuned to the needs of others. In the triumphal ending, Scrooge's change of heart also allows for the future of individuals such as Tiny Tim to change as well.

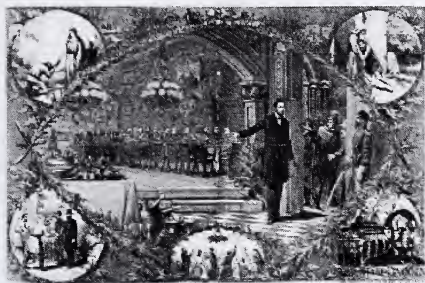
There is little evidence that Abraham Lincoln celebrated Christmas in ways that Charles Dickens's novella helped advance: holiday dinner, a Yule log, the exchange of presents, stockings by the fireplace, and a decorated tree. Subscribing to earlier Protestant traditions of visiting friends at New Year's, the Lincolns apparently never embraced the emerging Victorian symbols of celebration.

Looking at what is firmly documented for Lincoln's activities on December 25<sup>th</sup>, we find most of his time spent on letter-writing and, throughout the presidency, dealing with affairs of state. While serving in the Illinois Legislature in Vandalia, Lincoln voted against adjourning for Christmas. While serving in the United States House of Representatives, Lincoln spent the 1848 holiday straightening out an old legal issue with his friend Joshua Speed, ending the letter, "Nothing of consequence new here, beyond what you see in the papers."

December 25, 1861, offers two different views of the Lincoln family. It is clear that the Lincoln boys spent the day with the Taft family. Daughter Julia would frequently bring over her brothers Bud and Holly to play with Willie and Tad Lincoln. She later gave a series of lectures at the Chicago Historical Society (now the Chicago History Museum) about her memories of the Lincoln Executive Mansion. These lectures were published as a book, *Tad Lincoln's Father* (1931). Julia's father, Horatio Nelson Taft, kept a diary and recorded this for Wednesday, December 25, 1861: "It has been quite a noisy day about the house. Our three boys and the Two Lincoln boys have been very busy firing off Crackers & Pistols. Willie & Thomas Lincoln staid to Dinner at 4 o'clock." Meantime, Abraham and Mary Lincoln were entertaining friends from Kentucky and Illinois as well as some members of his cabinet. Orville Hickman Browning, who was appointed to serve out the remainder of the Senate seat of the late Stephen A. Douglas, was at this dinner. There is nothing in his diary entry to suggest holiday flair. It was during this time that diplomatic difficulties with England, over the seizure of two Confederate diplomats from the British mail packet *Trent*, were at a climax. According to Browning, Lincoln pulled him aside following the dinner and reassured him that problems over the *Trent* affair had been amicably resolved.

That it was business as usual at the Executive Mansion on December 25, 1861, is suggested by private secretary John Nicolay. Writing to his fiancée Thenera Bates, Nicolay jokes: "John [Hay] and I are moping the day away here in our offices like a couple of great owls in their holes, and expect in an hour or two to go down to Willards and get our 'daily bread' just as we do on each of the other three hundred and sixty four days of the year." Once again, the New Year's reception served as the most significant holiday on the White House social calendar.





In "The Union Christmas Dinner" of 1864, Lincoln invites Rebel soldiers to take their state-named seats at the table once again.

Lincoln received all sorts of gifts throughout the year. A specific Christmas gift was sent by telegram on Tuesday, December 20, 1864:

To His Excellency President Lincoln:

I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah, with one hundred and fifty heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, also about twenty-five thousand bales of cotton.

W.T. Sherman

Major-General

Undoubtedly one of the most unusual gifts was sent a few weeks before December 25, 1864, by the famed hunter and mountain man Seth Kinman. Sporting buckskin and long unkempt hair to match a long bushy beard, Kinman began presenting chairs made from animal bones and skins to presidents beginning with James Buchanan and continuing at least through Rutherford B. Hayes. On November 26, 1864, Kinman visited Lincoln in Washington to present a chair made from elk horns. Alfred Waud, an artist and illustrator, captured the scene in a drawing now at the Library of Congress. Lincoln is seen examining Kinman's rifle, with the elk horn chair in the background. Clearly, Lincoln was amused by his unusual visitor, who also played two songs for the president on a violin made from the skull of his mule, Dave.

The chair eventually was given by Robert Todd Lincoln to Clinton Lloyd, a friend of Kinman and Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives. It eventually was passed on to his son, George B. Lloyd of Springfield, Illinois, where it was displayed on several occasions and then disappeared. Like so many unusual holiday gifts such as gaudy ties, snow globes, and overly imaginative mugs and tea sets, the elk horn chair, one might hope, has been re-gifted with the possibility of resurfacing some day.



# SJ-R.COM

The State Journal-Register • Springfield, IL • The oldest newspaper in Illinois

## Lincoln did little to celebrate Christmas

By **PETE SHERMAN**  
**THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER**  
 Posted Dec 24, 2010 @ 10:15 PM  
 Last update Dec 24, 2010 @ 10:48 PM

Recommend

18 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



Was Abraham Lincoln a Christmas scrooge? A cursory examination of the evidence might lead to that conclusion. But state historian Tom Schwartz says it's not an altogether fair one.

Lincoln personally appears to have preferred working on Christmas Day. That fit with Puritan and Calvinist traditions that viewed Christmas as a holiday of excess and preferred a more austere observance of Jesus' birth.

"There's really no evidence that Lincoln did celebrate Christmas," Schwartz said. "He uses Christmas as just another day for work. But New Year's is different. He opened up the White House, first to the diplomatic corps and then to other guests."

Schwartz recently explored Lincoln's relationship to Christmas and the Christmas traditions of his day in a blog hosted by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

"The whole idea of the blog was to let people know he wasn't a scrooge, a misanthrope like Ebenezer. He was practicing a cultural inheritance, which he continued all the way to the end," Schwartz said.

Artists sometimes have placed Lincoln in the revisionist light of Charles Dickens, whose novel "A Christmas Carol," published in the early 1840s, helped shape American notions of what Christmas should be. In various artwork, Schwartz has found Lincoln portrayed as Santa Claus or holding court over an elaborate Christmas dinner.

"Even though you had the Victorians going back and reviving these ancient traditions with Yule logs and Christmas dinners and Charles Dickens — the growing trend in England was sweeping over into America — there's just nothing from contemporary observation that he celebrated it," Schwartz said.

If anything, it's surprising how little Lincoln acknowledged Christmas.

One example Schwartz cites is when Lincoln wrote to one of his best friends Joshua Speed, on Christmas Day, 1848. The letter is about legal matters. Not once does Lincoln mention Christmas.

Lincoln closes the letter by writing, "Nothing of consequence new here, beyond what you see in the papers. Present my kind regards to Mrs. Speed. Yours as ever."

Lincoln's version of Christmas would eventually lose out. In 1870, Christmas was declared a federal holiday by President Ulysses S. Grant.

...

### Lincoln and Christmas Day

Based on a chronology of Abraham Lincoln's life compiled by the Springfield-based Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln often spent Christmas Day working.

Of 10 Christmas days where records are available, Lincoln was shopping, writing friends about business and politics and meeting with his Cabinet as president. On one Christmas, it's possible he took broadside sword lessons.

In only one of those years — 1861, his first year as president — did Lincoln participate in a Christmas function, the documents indicate.

\*Friday, Dec. 25, 1840 (Springfield): Lincoln might have taken broadsword lessons, which perhaps led to his weapon of choice in his "duel" with political rival James Shields in fall of 1842.

\*Monday, Dec. 25, 1848 (Washington, D.C.): Lincoln writes to his friend Joshua Speed about a legal matter. "Nothing of consequence new here, beyond what you see in the papers. Present my kind regards to Mrs. Speed. Yours as ever," closes Lincoln, without any mention of Christmas.

\*Thursday, Dec. 25, 1851 (Springfield): Records show Lincoln spent \$4 on merchandise.

\*Thursday, Dec. 25, 1856 (Springfield): Lincoln writes Robert Boal of Lacon about Boal's interest in being Speaker of the House. The three-paragraph note makes no mention of Christmas.

\*Saturday, Dec. 25, 1858 (Springfield): Lincoln writes to Henry C. Whitney acknowledging receipt of "Tribunes" he asked for Nov. 30, 1858.

\*Sunday, Dec. 25, 1859 (Springfield): Lincoln writes to friend and political ally Lyman Trumbull about using the postmaster to distribute documents rather than delivering them directly to recipients. He also compliments Trumbull on a recent speech.

\*Wednesday, Dec. 25, 1861 (Washington, D.C.): Lincoln's Cabinet meets at 10 a.m. behind closed doors to consider releasing two participants involved in the "Trent" affair. The meeting lasts until 2 p.m. At night, Lincoln entertains a large number of guests, including family and old friends from Kentucky and Illinois, at a Christmas dinner.

\*Thursday, Dec. 25, 1862 (Washington, D.C.): Lincoln and his wife Mary visit hospitals in the afternoon.

\*Friday, Dec. 25, 1863 (Washington, D.C.): Lincoln reads to his assistant John Hay and others an article he wrote regarding the constitutionality of the draft and discusses plans for an "Amnesty and Reconstruction Proclamation to people of rebellious districts." He also recommends to Bayard Taylor that he prepare a lecture on "Serfs, Serfdom, and Emancipation in Russia."

\*Sunday, Dec. 25, 1864 (Washington, D.C.): Lincoln writes a letter concerning Private David Henry Patterson, a member of the 9th New York Cavalry's Company K, who was injured in battle and whose mother hoped he'd be released home.

Source: *The Lincoln Log, Papers of Abraham Lincoln, relying on newspaper accounts, diaries, letters and other historical documents*

#### Want to learn more?

To learn what Lincoln did on any particular day, visit the Lincoln Log at [www.thelincolnlog.org](http://www.thelincolnlog.org).

To read state historian Tom Schwartz's blog post about Lincoln and Christmas, visit [www.alplm.org/blog](http://www.alplm.org/blog).

Copyright 2010 The State Journal-Register. Some rights reserved

## Popular Videos



Bloomberg Details  
N.Y. Storm Plans



Snowstorm hits  
East Coast



Monster Storm  
Heads for  
Mid-Atlantic,  
Northeast



Bob Schieffer's  
Holiday Verse



Harlem Boys and  
Girls Choir



The Nutcracker  
Marathon

#### 1 Weird Tip To Belly Fat

Follow This 1 Rule And Lose 12lbs In 14 Days.  
[News-Health6.com](http://News-Health6.com)

#### \$79/Hr Job - 488 Openings

Make a \$79/hr Working From Home. As seen on CNN & FOX News.  
[www.hound.com/jobs/](http://www.hound.com/jobs/)

#### Lincoln® Official Site

See photos, specs, prices, options, more. Find a dealer.  
[Lincoln.com](http://Lincoln.com)

Ads by Yahoo!

#### Comments (0)

Login or register to post a comment:

Login

Username:

Password:

Forgot password

Login

Register

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

☐

I agree to the terms of use

☐

I am over 13 years of age

NOTE: Your inbox must accept emails from "no-reply@gatehousemedia.com"

Register



**RENTING HAS NEVER BEEN  
MORE BUSINESS FRIENDLY.**

**Budget** business  
program  
**ENROLL TODAY**

[Contact us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [About our Ads](#)

The State Journal-Register | Springfield, IL 62701

Copyright © 2006-2010 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons license, except where noted.

SEO by eLocalListing | Advertiser profiles | RadarFrog Merchant Directory







## Happy Holidays!



The Christmas Tree - Winslow Homer 1859

Today it would be difficult for the average American to overlook the Christmas holiday, with displays at most retail stores, Christmas specials on television, and lights illuminating neighborhoods around the country. How was Christmas celebrated in the 1800s? How did the Lincoln family celebrate the holiday?

### Popular Culture

Santa Claus, also referred to as Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, and/or St. Nicholas, is a combination of many different legends and mythical creatures as told through the centuries by a multitude of cultures and faiths. The modern image of Santa Claus had not fully solidified in the public's eye until the later half of the nineteenth century, when Thomas Nast's drawing of the fat jolly elf with a bag full of presents appeared in *Harper's Weekly*

in the 1870s and 1880s. Christmas literature of the time period included *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, written by Clement Moore in 1822 and Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which was published in America in 1843. Christmas carols of the Lincoln era included *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, written in 1850, and *We Three Kings of Orient Are*, written in 1857.

### Decorations/Dining



Godey's Lady's Book - 1850

The Christmas tree was first represented in popular print in a woman's magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*, in 1850. The image was an Americanized version of a very popular image of Queen Victoria and her family from the *Illustrated London News*. America's fondness for Queen Victoria helped popularize the idea of having a Christmas tree inside the home. While we have no evidence that the Lincolns had a Christmas tree, the family may have visited the Christmas tree exhibited at the First Presbyterian Church located a few blocks away.

Decorations were minimal and often not put up until Christmas Eve after the children had gone to bed. Garland, holly,

and evergreen boughs covering the mantels, pictures, chandeliers, and door and window frames, and perhaps a sprig of mistletoe tucked in some opportunistic spot decorated the homes. The poinsettia became a popular decoration in the United States in the 1850s and spring bulbs "forced" to bloom were also popular.

Then, as now, the holidays were a time for special foods. A typical menu for a special holiday season may have included boned turkey, oysters, venison, chicken salad, biscuits, bullion, glazed fruit, fruit cake, ice cream, cake, candy, macaroon pyramids, citrus fruit, preserves, wine, eggnog, and hot coffee.

## Stockings/Gifts



Lincoln Home Stocking

There is evidence to suggest that the Lincoln family participated in the Christmas tradition of stuffing stockings with small gifts. Lincoln family biographer Ruth Painter Randall's 1955 work, *Lincoln's Sons*, tells of the Lincolns hanging Christmas stockings. The eldest son, Robert, "was careful not to disturb the illusions of Willie and Tad as to the one who had filled those stockings."

Popular Christmas gifts for boys in the mid-nineteenth century included wooden toys, books, popcorn balls, and candy. The

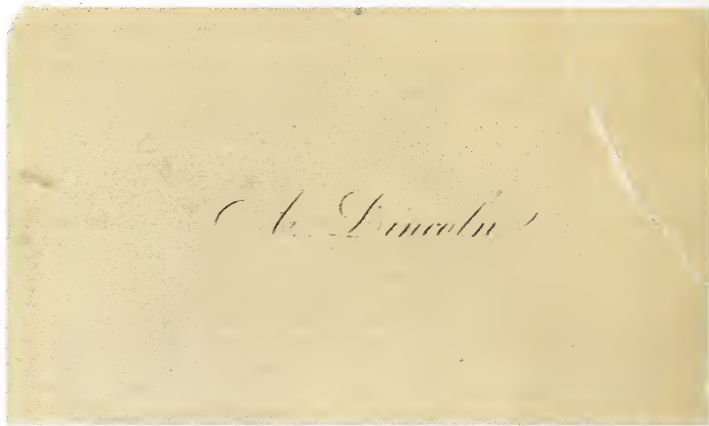
list also included firecrackers, guns, cannons, and horns which were used for noise-making. Research suggests that most firecrackers of the time period were large, made from gunpowder instead of flash powder, dangerous, and very loud.

Adults often gave each other books, note paper, pens, fancy perfumes, soaps. Mr. Lincoln was recorded in the store register of John Williams & Co. as buying 4 linen handkerchiefs, 3 gentlemen's silk handkerchiefs, and 4 children's silk handkerchiefs on December 24, 1860.

## New Year's Day

A very popular holiday tradition for the Lincolns was hosting and attending open houses on New Year's Day. A part of this tradition, practiced year-round, was the presentation of calling cards when visiting someone's home. Calling cards were often placed on a silver dish or in a calling card basket. The size of a card differed on the

basis of the sex of the caller--a man's card was half the size of a woman's card. Cards with their upper right-hand corner folded over were sent to inform the receiver of a visit. Cards with their upper left-hand corner folded over were sent to inform the receiver of any necessary congratulations.



Abraham Lincoln's Calling Card - NPS Artifact



